Vegetarianism!? What does that even mean?

In recent years, vegetarian lifestyles have become much more popular in the U.S. and, partly because of that, there has also been some confusion over what it means to be a vegetarian or to consume vegetarian meals. Here are some common examples of different types of vegetarianism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Choose to Eat...</th>
<th>Type of Vegetarian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vegan = Total Vegetarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants and Plant Products</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Meat</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey, Fish, Chicken, Lamb, Pork</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

American Dietetic Association
1) Vegetarianism is ALWAYS healthier than a diet containing meat.
   - Vegetarians CAN have a healthier diet (by eliminating saturated fat and cholesterol in meat, eggs, and cheese) BUT vegetarians must still be sure to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. For example, vegetarians who choose to consume high levels of refined grains or fats are likely going to incur the same health risks as people consuming a traditional, meat-based diet.

2) Vegetarians don’t consume enough protein and miss out on other crucial nutrients.
   - Even if vegetarians don’t consume dairy or eggs, there are still many foods that contain protein such as beans, peas, nuts, and soy products. A vegetarian consuming a wide variety of healthy foods will likely have adequate intakes of iron, calcium, zinc and other micronutrients. Fortification of food (which is common) complements these nutrient intakes as well as providing a source for B-12, which is only found in animal products.

3) Vegetarians eat a lot of tofu.
   - Some vegetarians might eat a lot of tofu but you don’t have to! There are many other protein options for vegetarians (see Myth #2). However, some food companies are producing soy products that are remarkably similar in taste and texture to meat.

4) All vegetarians are extreme environmentalists or animal rights activists.
   - There are many reasons a person might choose to become a vegetarian and these are only two of them! For example, others may choose a vegetarian lifestyle for health or economical reasons. Some Olympian athletes even consume vegetarian diets as one strategy to improve their performance in the pool, on the field, or in the arena!

5) Vegetarians can’t eat anything
   - Just because vegetarians don’t consume meat, doesn’t mean they can’t enjoy some of their favorite foods. Many meat-based dishes like pizza, pasta, chili, or stews can be made vegetarian by withholding meat from the dish and adding in more beans, vegetables, grains, or nuts. Restaurants commonly serve vegetarian meals and some will even withhold meat from certain dishes upon request.
Why Should I go Vegetarian?

Animal-rights issues aside, here are some great reasons to make one or more meals a week meat-less:

- **It's cheaper!**
  - The cheapest cuts of beef cost $3-$4 per pound, on average, while dried beans or lentils cost as little as a dollar a pound.

- **Live longer**
  - Red meat consumption is associated with increased mortality

- **Lose weight**
  - Vegetarians tend to consume fewer calories and have a lower body mass than non-vegetarians.

- **Decrease heart disease and cancer risk**
  - Reducing saturated fat and cholesterol consumption decreases overall heart disease risk. Diets high in fruits and vegetables may prevent a variety of cancers.

- **It's more environmentally friendly**
  - Animals require a lot of land, energy (both fuel and grain for the animals to eat), and time to be ready for slaughter. In fact, meat-based diets require 3 times more fossil fuel in production and to reach the consumer than plant-based diets.

- **Reduce exposure to antibiotics and pesticides**
  - In the U.S., large farms use a variety of antibiotics and growth hormones to promote growth and health of livestock in cramped living quarters. If organic isn't an option, consuming vegetarian meals is another way to reduce your exposure to these potentially harmful residues.

- **Global hunger impact**
  - Consider this: about 250 pounds of beef can be produced from an acre of land but **40,000 pounds of potatoes** can be produced on that same acre.

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**I’m still not convinced! Tips and tricks for transitioning to vegetarian meals**

1) **Aim to make meat a side dish rather than the main dish or focus in a meal.**
2) **Gradually add less meat to casseroles, stews, and pasta dishes and replace the meat with beans or meat alternatives.**
3) **Many family favorites such as lasagna, chili, pizza, and burritos can easily be made without meat. Try removing the meat from these dishes and incorporating more vegetables or beans in.**
4) **Experiment with recipes using different beans, nuts, soy products, grains, and meat alternatives to find options that taste great to you and your family.**

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What’s New at Food Gatherers?

Don’t forget about Grillin’, one of Food Gatherers’ largest annual fundraisers. The event will take place on Sunday, June 10th from 3-8 pm. There will be lots of great food from some of the area’s finest restaurants, live music, games and activities for kids, massages, and a silent auction with all proceeds benefitting Food Gatherers and, in turn, our partner agencies.

Tickets may be purchased at Food Gatherers, Zingerman’s, and the Saline and Dexter Picture Frame companies.

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[Image]
BLACK RICE WITH BLACK-EYED PEAS AND GREENS

Serves: 6 to 8
- 1 cup wild rice
- 3 cups vegetable broth or water
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 medium carrots, thinly sliced
- 2 large celery stalks, finely diced
- 3 to 4 scallions, white and green parts, thinly sliced
- 2 cups cooked fresh or thawed frozen corn kernels
- 10 to 12 ounces collards greens or kale (any variety), stemmed and cut into narrow ribbons
- 15- to 16-ounce can black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- Juice of 1/2 to 1 lemon, to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh dill, or more, to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley, or more, to taste
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- Toasted pumpkin seeds for topping, optional

1) Combine the wild or black rice in a saucepan with the broth. Bring to a simmer, then cover and simmer gently until the water is absorbed, about 40 minutes.
2) Heat the oil in a large skillet or stir-fry pan. Add the carrots, celery, and white parts of the scallion and sauté over medium heat until all are golden. Stir in the green parts of the scallion and corn.
3) In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add chopped onion and sauté, stirring until it softens, about 5 minutes. Add the greens, and stir quickly to coat with the oil, then add 1/4 cup water. Continue cooking until greens are wilted down and nearly tender, about 3 to 5 minutes.
4) Add the black-eyed peas, vinegar, and lemon juice. Stir together and cook for a minute or two, then stir in the wild or black rice.
5) Stir in the dill and parsley, then season with salt and pepper. Serve at once, passing around pumpkin seeds for topping individual servings if desired.

Final Food for Thought

Even if you don’t want to give up meat for the rest of your life, including more vegetarian meals in your diet can help you lead a healthier, longer life and save money on ever-increasing food bills.

For more information, questions, comments or concerns,
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